

Community Engagement Task Force Meeting
Tuesday, January 16, 2017
6pm-8:30pm

Meeting Attendance:

Task Force Members: Brad Johnson, Damon Circosta, George Chapman, Joyce Fitzpatrick, Valerie Jordan, Carole Meyre, , Amy Fulk, Courtney Crowder, Tom Oxholm

Guests: 11

City Council: 2

City Staff: 5

- I. **Welcome-** Damon Circosta, Task Force Chair, opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- II. **Introduction of Meeting-** Chris Aycock, facilitator, briefly reviewed the meeting agenda and tasks for the meeting.
- III. **Presentation-** Brad Johnson presented what other cities across the U.S. do for citizen engagement. He provided a quick scan on 44 U.S. Cities and their respective populations. The cities scanned varied in population and geography. For example, Mr. Johnson provided summaries for North Carolina cities such as: Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Chapel Hill, Cary, and Greenville. Moreover, he provided summaries for cities such as: Austin, TX, Houston, TX, Fort Worth, TX, Atlanta, GA, Burlington, VT, Nashville, TN, and Orlando, FL.

Mr. Johnson concluded his presentation with noting that he was specifically impressed by three (3) cities during his research. Those cities are as follows: St. Paul, MN, Cincinnati, OH, and Toronto, Canada.

- IV. **Presentation-** Tom Oxholm presented the Wake County Public School System's citizen engagement system, and how that system could relate to the City of Raleigh's citizen engagement system. Moreover, Mr. Oxholm provided a document that specifically outlined how a new CAC system could be structured. Mr. Oxholm's comments were around accountability, structure, culture, and values.

He noted that accountability is the key, and the size and number of the CAC's do not allow for the most effective engagement. Therefore, the structure of the CAC becomes more important. Mr. Oxholm suggested that the structure of the CAC's follow City Council district lines. Damon Circosta asked for clarity on the proposed system. Mr. Oxholm noted that WCPSS has districts associated with the representative board member. Each district has a point person and there are three (3) meetings per year in which information is shared.

Carole Meyre asked if the “point person” was appointed, and if they were paid. The answer was yes they were appointed, but not paid.

- V. **Presentation-** Amy Fulk presented best practices by cities in the Northwest. These cities were as follows: Portland, OR, Seattle ,WA, and Tacoma, WA. Mrs. Fulk provided a quick synopsis of Portland, OR. She noted that they have seven (7) district offices and they are comprised of neighborhoods. These district offices get direct support and funding from the City. In addition, there is a Neighborhood Coalition Board which serves as the representative mechanism for the districts.

The City of Seattle has 13 districts which are called Neighborhood Councils, and they are currently reviewing how these districts fit into their citizen engagement process. They have created a Community Involvement Commission to assist in this effort. It is anticipated that this commission will serve as an on-going body after their initial work is complete.

The final best practice that Mrs. Fulk discussed was from the City of Tacoma. Tacoma’s engagement process has been in place since 1992. They use neighborhoods groups as their primary mechanism for citizen engagement.

- VI. **Presentation-** Damon Circosta presented the Neighborhood Congress. This is the mechanism by which the City of Greensboro engages with their citizens. The Neighborhood Congress is a collection of self-appointed neighborhoods. These neighborhoods apply to be accepted into the Congress. The Neighborhood Congress is a 501 C 3 that does not have a formal role with the City of Greensboro. Their mission is to promote safe neighborhoods, enhance property values, and encourage neighbors to be acquainted with each other.
- VII. **Overview of other Citizen Engagement Mechanisms-** Niki Jones (City Staff) noted that the City uses mechanisms other than CAC’s and the list of engagement tools discussed in prior meetings. He discussed how some issues require public hearings, and how citizens have the opportunity to provide input at those public hearings. Some of those issues that go to public hearings are as follows:

- Plan Amendments
- Rezoning
- Text Changes
- Annexations
- Street Closings
- Business Investment Grants
- Budget

Mr. Jones also noted two other mechanisms that the City uses to gather input. He noted that City Council allows the “Request for Petitions of Citizens” as a process to

obtain input from citizens. In addition, he noted that many departments have protocols related to public meetings. He used the Housing and Neighborhoods Department as an example. Moreover, he noted that public meetings were part of Community Developments Citizen Participation Plan.

- VIII. **Open Discussion** – The Task Force had open discussions pertaining to the existing CAC structure, and their scope. The discussion went back and forth between the “blue sky” agreement and how to structure the best citizen engagement model to whether or not the CAC’s should be involved in rezonings.

At the end of the conversation, there was consensus to separate the blue sky discussion from the rezoning discussion. However, there was also agreement that the rezoning discussion needed to occur prior to finalizing any structure for a new citizen engagement model.

- IX. **Closing**-The Task Force noted that they would allow citizen participation at the end of every meeting going forward. There will be 15 minutes allocated at the end of every meeting for this purpose.

The Task Force further discussed the structure of a new engagement system. Courtney Crowder commented about geographic boundaries, staffing, and budget. Valerie Jordan asked about whether or not a survey to City Council or CAC leadership was appropriate. Also, there were comments about how elected officials would fit into the CAC structure. At the end, Damon Circosta again asked that the Task Force if it were OK to create a framework that did not address rezonings until the end.

- X. **Adjourn**

Next Meeting: Monday, January 30th from 6pm-830pm.